

## A Slow Motion Spin by twowritehands

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**Summary:**

"The Chief and her, they've screwed before, huh?"

A pre-series screw.

## **A Slow Motion Spin**

**December 1980**

The Chief stayed out even when the light snow, which had teased Hawkins all day, turned into full out blizzard conditions. The fat flakes fell fast and heavy and anyone with sense would get in and stay in, but Jim stayed on the roads. It was part of his new job to help the people of Hawkins. This time of an evening, everyone would be trying to get home--it wouldn't do to have them stranded in a ditch somewhere.

So around and around he drove, criss crossing through Roane County at a steady pace, blue lights on but siren off just to make sure he could be seen as a beacon of help for whoever needed it.

The bronco slipped and slid on the snowy roads that had yet to be plowed or salted. The snow fell heavy enough that some of the legs of his journey meant he cut through untouched blankets of snow where no tires had gone ahead of him to offer tracks to follow. He had put chains on the tires that morning and he met no obstacle that four wheel drive and Know-How couldn't beat.

All the radio stations only played carols at this point so he didn't even bother. Sara had loved carols, snow, all of it--but he couldn't think of that. Packing those thoughts away, he pulled the orange bottle from his coat pocket and swallowed a pill. He miserably wished he could drink on the job.

Alas, he drove in silence punctuated the icy flakes bouncing against his windshield and the pulse of his wipers. Occasionally, the CB crackled with reports from his officers--also out and about--finding and helping people.

"Chief," Flo called, "Benny has called about people pounding on the doors of his restaurant."

He picked up the handset, "In this weather?"

"They want to buy his eggs and burger buns, because the Big Buy

sold out of essentials an hour ago,” she reported. Jim huffed. Tiniest bit of weather and this town flocked to the store to stock up in the event of being snowed in for a week. Flo continued, “But Benny won’t sell empty buns and uncooked eggs. The people are getting irate, and he’s lost his temper. Someone better get over there before he gets another assault charge.”

“If they want it that bad, tell Benny to sell the damn food for twice its value and shut up about it.”

“That’s what I said,” Flo’s voice cracked from the speaker, “But *he said* that his truck won’t be in until Tuesday. If this snow melts off by morning he’ll have nothing to make for anyone and will be--and I quote--screwed out of a week of business.”

Jim sighed, “Alright, well I’m out in the boonies.”

Callahan's voice came over the airwaves, “I’m right by that area, Chief, I’ll swing over and handle it.”

“Thanks, Phil.” He put the handset back and slowed his already meandering pace to make a curve. It was a good thing he did, because a moment later he slammed on his breaks. The bronco slid on the ice about four feet, close enough for the idiot in the middle of the road to touch the hood with her bare hands.

He recognized her small, pale face.

Throwing it in park, he ripped open his door and stepped out into the snowstorm, “Christ, Joyce!”

“Hopper! Thank God!” She rushed at him, coat open and without a hat or gloves. “I-I did this slow motion spin thing straight into a ditch!” she mimicked the spin with wide gestures and flung a hand back down the road. She wasn't harmed, and when he looked in the direction she indicated, he saw no car in sight. He caught her hands in his, finding them like ice.

“You're frozen! Where’s your car?”

“Back there a ways. I was going for help.”

He pulled her toward the bronco, all but putting her in the passenger seat himself. His heater was still on full blast, and he'd had the sense to close his door behind him when he left the Jeep so he hadn't lost much of the accumulated heat from his long drive.

He crammed her hands up against the vents, "How's it going to help when you lose your hands and nose to frostbite, huh?"

"I couldn't just sit there all night. I need to get home."

"Are your boys home safe?" he asked.

"Left early from school."

"Anybody with them?" he asked and the question made her eyes flash with offense.

"They are fourteen and ten now. They can handle things."

"I know," Jim said apologetically, "I wasn't doubting. I was wondering where the hell that husband of yours is."

"Ex," she returned with a sniff of her little red nose, "and trust me, they are safer without him."

"What does THAT mean?" Jim fairly exploded, "Do I need to haul him in again?"

"No!" She batted her hands like his questions were irritating flies, "Just leave it alone!"

"Joyce--" he started.

"Drop it, Hopper," she cut in and her tone made him obey even though he was always dying for an excuse to arrest Lonnie.

"Ok," he turned to his steering wheel, dropping the engine into drive, "Where's your car?"

"Right up here," she sniffed wetly, brushing her hair from her face. She was still cold. He reached over the back of his seat and pulled up a fleece blanket from the floorboard. He dumped it over her with

orders to get warm.

“I’m fine, Hopper.”

He accepted it until he realized that what she meant by *right up here* was a mile. In these conditions with no hat. No coat. Not even a lot of hair over her neck and ears--what did they call them? Pixie cuts? Cute as hell on her but not *practical* for the season.

His frustration with her came out in a sigh as he rolled to a stop beside her now snow-covered car tilted into the ditch and facing the wrong way. What he could see of it beneath the snow seemed unharmed. A “slow motion spin” meant she had at least been going at a kind of creeping speed when it happened.

Thank God.

“Think you can get it out?” she asked. He had a chain and a hitch but the ditch was deep and the snow was only getting deeper.

“Better to just leave it. I’ll take ya home. Have Earl tow it back to your place in the morning.”

“I can’t afford a tow,” she said instantly.

“He owes me one.”

She scoffed, putting a hand to her forehead, “God, Hopper. Don’t do that.”

“Joyce, it’s a favor between old friends.”

“Well, thanks,” she relented. He found himself looking into her eyes. God, they were every bit as big and brown as he could remember. Since coming back to Hawkins, he found old memories around every bend in the road, but few of them were as pleasant as the memories he had made with Joyce.

High school felt like two lifetimes ago. His dad’s Oldsmobile. Singing along to the Beatles. Brushing her hair from her face and leaning in for the kiss...

Dropping into the memory was surreal, as lately his mind had only cared to take the old memories of his hometown in comparison to his more recent past. His marriage. Fatherhood... hospitals...divorce papers... tombstones. Remembering the unpolluted happiness of his seventeen year old self was refreshing. It somehow made him feel a little less shattered. A little more put back together.

Joyce smiled as she held his eye and it was a smile he remembered well even though he hadn't thought of it in nearly sixteen years. He leaned a fraction closer, drawn in by the dark sparkle in her eye.

The CB crackled with Powell's report of a fallen tree across town, and the moment broke, dumping him right back in the present.

The way Joyce jumped and looked away with a nervous fidget made him wonder if she wasn't remembering the same things. He reached without thinking, and his hand closed over hers. Their eyes met again. This time, it passed silently between them that they would forget the ruthless present and return to the carefree sixties, when they were young and stupid.

Uncaring of regulations or traffic laws, he left the Jeep in park and captured her mouth for a kiss. She moved into it. He pulled her across the bench seat right up against him. The breath of the storm that clung to her melted away as their combined body heat erased the last icy snowflakes on her clothes.

They kissed like the old days, only now without any hesitation to touch, and shove clothes aside to get in close where it was hot and good.

When her hands worked under his shirt, he tilted her back down on the bench seat, went to a knee on the leather, pulled her leg up, and lowered down over her.

She giggled and Jim lost his breath. His chest twisted in welcome of that long forgotten sound. He kissed the hollow of her throat and drew a line back to her lips. She nibbled on his ear and then found that special spot just below his jaw. He trembled and rested his forehead on her chest bone. He swore he could feel her heartbeat vibrating there. "Joyce..." he laughed.

Without a word, she undid his belt. The holster slipped forward and he pushed it back. His hat fell to the floorboard as they got her bottoms out of the way. Her plastic name tag clicked against his metal badge as they settled, bodies fitting together completely. A consciousness of the laws being broken here, as well as eagerness to vanish into such potent pleasure, lent the moment a frenzied haste. He pushed in, she gasped. They rocked and moaned together. She met his every move and spiked his pleasure with a choked, stuttered, “O-oh baby, that's it!”

He agreed hungrily, devouring each kiss her red hot lips pressed to his face. He felt *alive* and good--so good. This was so. Damn. Good.

She started to hum and whimper. Jim closed his eyes to savor it as she shook apart beneath him. His chest tightened again with a throb so powerful it jumped out of his throat as a cough. He fumbled to finish into his hand but really just made a mess.

They both chortled, breathlessly. He fished a handkerchief from his pocket and cleaned up. Joyce kept her hands on his meaty flank, thin fingers lightly scratching. It made him sleepy.

He brushed hair from her eyes, booped her nose, and plucked at her bottom lip before giving her one last big kiss. By then, neither of them could forget that they were in an idling truck on the side of the road. The blizzard was only getting worse, too.

“My boys.”

They straightened up, still rosy cheeked and good humored. The drive to her house took twice as long for his cautious creeping speed but she didn't complain. They kept glancing at one another, making eye contact more often than not. She looked away shyly every time.

In her driveway, she unlatched the door but paused. “Thanks, Hop.”

Jim's lips parted around a question mark kind of silent laugh. She never called him Hop before.

“This was fun,” he said. “See you around?”

She looked at her house, blushed, and nodded. “Y-yeah. I'll...I'll call

you sometime.”

Jim smiled widely. “Great.”

He watched her stomp through the snow drifts and into the house. His tires spun a little and at one point he didn't think he would ever get back on the road again, but finally the chains caught and four-wheel drive lumbered him back down the lonely lane.

He looked forward to her call. The weeks went by and it didn't come. As casually as he could, he stopped by her store to buy a few things. For the first few seconds that she saw him, she was like a terrified little doe. Then she gave him a bland smile and stuck to the pleasantries, hardly meeting his eye. Right as she finished ringing him up, she said as if on a second thought, though he knew it wasn't, “Oh, and thanks so much for helping me get home the other night. It meant a lot.”

He got the message and didn't shop at her store anymore. He wasn't offended; she had every right to chose taking care of her boys over him. Jim couldn't exactly claim to be *good* for anyone, anyway.

Ever since that flat-line tone on the hospital monitor, his life was in a tail spin--but like Joyce's car on the ice, he had been moving slowly when he lost control and so now spun in slow motion into a cold, deep ditch. He didn't hurt himself or anyone else, but he wasn't getting anywhere at all.

Other women smiled and got in close, and he let them, finding quick bursts of escape which petered out too quickly and left him twice as sad. He kept trying, though. He kept looking for that feeling again, that less-shattered wholeness he'd felt that snowy evening in his bronco. But it stayed as far out of his reach as Joyce.

So, day by day, year by year, the world kept slowly spinning around him.

But, it wouldn't stay that way forever.